

The Solidarity Trade Union played a singular role in achieving that great goal, and I give my wholehearted support to this resolution which honors the men and women of that movement.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 328, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### ACKNOWLEDGING AFRICAN DESCENDANTS OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE IN ALL OF THE AMERICAS

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 175) acknowledging African descendants of the transatlantic slave trade in all of the Americas with an emphasis on descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean, recognizing the injustices suffered by these African descendants, and recommending that the United States and the international community work to improve the situation of Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 175

Whereas during Black History Month it is important that we not forget that African-Americans are not the only survivors of the transatlantic slave trade;

Whereas like the United States, many European nations benefited greatly from the colonization of Latin America and the Caribbean and their participation in the slave trade;

Whereas the story of African descendants in all of the Americas remains untold, leading them to be forgotten, made invisible, and allowed to suffer unjustly;

Whereas it is important to acknowledge that as a result of the slave trade and immigration, approximately 80,000,000 to 150,000,000 persons of African descent live in Latin America and the Caribbean, making them the largest population of persons of African descent outside of Africa;

Whereas Afro-descendants are present in most all Latin American countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela;

Whereas the size of Afro-descendant populations vary in range from less than 1 percent in some countries to as much as 30 per-

cent in Colombia and 46 percent in Brazil and make up the majority in some Spanish speaking Caribbean nations, such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic;

Whereas Afro-descendant populations have made significant economic, social, and cultural contributions to their countries and the Western Hemisphere from their unfortunate involvement in the transatlantic slave trade to their recent contributions to trade, tourism, and other industries;

Whereas although persons of African descent have made significant achievements in education, employment, economic, political, and social spheres in some countries, the vast majority are marginalized—living in impoverished communities where they are excluded from centers of education, government, and basic human rights based upon the color of their skin and ancestry;

Whereas Afro-descendants have shorter life expectancies, higher rates of infant mortality, higher incidences of HIV/AIDS, higher rates of illiteracy, and lower incomes than do other populations;

Whereas Afro-descendants encounter problems of access to healthcare, basic education, potable water, housing, land titles, credit, equal justice and representation under the law, political representation, and other economic, political, health, and basic human rights; and

Whereas skin color and ancestry have led African-Americans in the United States and African descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean to share similar injustices, leading to economic, social, health, and political inequalities: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—*

(1) recognizes and honors African descendants in the Americas for their contributions to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of the countries in the Americas, particularly in Latin American and Caribbean societies;

(2) recognizes that as a result of their skin color and ancestry, African descendants in the Americas have wrongfully experienced economic, social, and political injustices;

(3) urges the President to take appropriate measures to encourage the celebration and remembrance of the achievements of African descendants in the Americas and a resolution of injustices suffered by African descendants in the Americas;

(4) encourages the United States and the international community to work to ensure that extreme poverty is eradicated, universal education is achieved, quality healthcare is made available, and equal access to justice and representation under the law is granted in Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean; and

(5) encourages the United States and the international community to achieve these goals in Latin America and the Caribbean by—

(A) promoting research that focuses on identifying and eradicating racial disparities in economic, political, and social spheres;

(B) promoting programs that focus on Afro-descendant communities;

(C) providing technical support and training to Afro-descendant advocacy groups that work to uphold basic human rights in the region;

(D) promoting the creation of an international working group that focuses on problems of communities of Afro-descendants in the Americas; and

(E) promoting trade and other bilateral and multilateral agreements that take into account the needs of Afro-descendant communities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from

Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the concurrent resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, progress for some of the Afro-Latino communities in the Western Hemisphere has been disturbingly low. Estimates show that almost one-third of the population in Latin America is made up of descendants of West African slaves brought to the Americas by European slave traders during the colonial period.

Afro-Latinos comprise either a majority or a large minority in a number of Latin American nations, including the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. Yet reports indicate that most Afro-Latinos are among the poorest, most marginalized groups in that region.

Thus, as we press for democratic progress, for prosperity, and for security in our hemisphere, and we focus to maximize our efforts to reduce poverty, part of a comprehensive strategy must also include efforts to address the needs and provide for the rights of the Afro-Latino community in the region.

The resolution before us urges us to take a thoughtful, proactive approach to achieve such goals.

I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for bringing this issue to our attention and for introducing this important measure. I also wish to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE); the gentleman from California (Ranking Member LANTOS); the gentleman from Indiana (Chairman BURTON), the chairman of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere; and the gentleman from New Jersey (Ranking Member MENENDEZ) for their efforts to expeditiously bring this resolution before the House today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud my colleagues for bringing this resolution to the House for consideration. I deeply appreciate the efforts of my dear friend and esteemed colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), for offering this resolution, and my colleagues,

the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS), for their tireless efforts on behalf of African descendants throughout the globe.

People of African descent in this country have benefited from longstanding efforts to raise public awareness of their history and their circumstances. But we must not forget, Mr. Speaker, that there is an equally complex history for African descendants throughout the Americas, and their current situation demands our attention and our action as well.

The resolution of the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) seeks to remove the cloak of invisibility that has hidden the faces of so many of our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere from their own countrymen and from the rest of the world.

□ 1600

African descendants are present in great numbers in the Caribbean and in a few Latin American countries such as Brazil where they comprise approximately 45 percent of the population. But many African descendants also reside in Latin American nations where their presence is less well known, such as Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama and Mexico.

The history of Afro descendants in these countries stretches back centuries. In Mexico, for example, individuals in the Costa Chica area are believed to be descendants of slaves who were brought there in the 17th century to work on the area's extensive cattle ranches. Today some of the names of Mexican towns in the Veracruz region reflect this history: Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Mandinga and Mocambo.

While African descendants no longer are enslaved in Latin America and the Caribbean, they tend to be marginalized in many societies. This leaves them vulnerable to economic hardship and to upheaval such as civil conflict.

In Colombia, just 2 months ago, intense fighting between leftist guerrillas and their right wing paramilitary foes forced more than 2,000 mainly Afro-Colombian villagers from their homes. The United Nations Commission for Refugees has said that the situation for these communities is worsening, and it has warned that these communities are at high risk of severe hardship and insecurity as a result of these illegal armed groups occupying their land.

Mr. Speaker, the plight of African descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean has been ignored for far too long. The gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL's) resolution before us begins to address the injustices and inequities that they have suffered, first by recognizing the situation and then by seeking to address it through raising awareness. The measure also encourages the United States and the international community to work to ensure that extreme poverty is eradicated, universal education is achieved, quality health care is made available and equal access to justice and representation under the law is granted to Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield such time as he may consume to the author of the resolution, the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Ways and Means, one of our leaders in the Congress and my dear friend.

(Mr. RANGEL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a very emotional and historic day to see that the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), who is such a great American and yet she has this pride and that Cuban blood which emphasizes that when you have that, you can become even a better American.

And then on this side of the aisle to find my friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), an international personality that came from Hungary, but his people were not satisfied just to come from all over the world. They needed someplace that they could feel that was theirs. They needed a homeland. And out of that came the birth and the greatness of Jewish people all over the world, because they knew that they had a place that they could be so proud of. And it is that pride, or lack of pride that determines what we can do.

And here, me in the aisle, coming from a family that comes from families of slaves, what a trio we are to be in this House of Representatives in this great country enjoying who we are and where we came from and not being satisfied with that, but reaching out and saying that those that come from Africa, no matter where they are, we want them, if not to have a traditional homeland, at least to have that culture, that pride, that self-esteem that makes a difference.

Mr. Speaker, not too long ago I was in Germany with the Chancellor, and even though there was no one of the Jewish faith in the CODEL, he went out of his way during this NATO meeting to show how friendly and supportive the German government was to Israel. When it occurred at every meeting, I said, "Mr. Chancellor, is there a particular reason why you are emphasizing the friendship and support that you give to Israel?" And he said, "Yes, Congressman. The people of Germany committed acts, atrocities on these people, and it is not enough to say that you are sorry. You have to show in some way that the conscience of Germans should not have to carry this burden," because they recognize not just an apology but they had to do something.

We are not asking Americans or white people to be ashamed for what

happened, but it does help when you say an act of injustice has been committed by certain people of this world, to take human beings who God has made and to treat them like machines, to treat them like chattel, to tear them away from their families, to use them to build economies, whether we are talking about cotton, sugar or rum or mining, and then just to walk away and say I did not do it.

Well, no one is saying who did it. But what makes a person great is to be able to say what you did about it.

It seems difficult that for me, as a child, the word "African" was used as an insulting adjective as to who was then Colored or Negro or whatever they were called.

But how did all of this happen? It happened because it was a planned strategy, not only to control the body of people, but to control their minds to such an extent that even among those of African descent they discriminated against each other.

I had hoped one day when I get to heaven and have a chance to talk with God directly, that I would ask her, what did people of color ever do to make you so angry? As we go to the different countries in the Caribbean and Central and South America, how can you determine poverty and misery and disease by one's color? Well, you do it.

And she would say, when racism and evil people come in and make you do this to yourself, very much like the terrorists who God has made, it is an evil that comes in that causes them to want to destroy; and when you destroy one's self-esteem, you destroy their confidence, you tear away their culture, their music, their education and deny them who they are and where they came from, then you get someone that cannot effectively compete.

We in the Congressional Black Caucus recognize what we have had to go through in our own country. We have seen the tremendous advancements that have been made. But we are not satisfied with that. We want to help those in Brazil, those in Colombia, those in Central and South America, and especially those in Mexico, to understand that when God made all these beautiful colors He made it for all of us to feel a sense of pride. And this is what we hope that we are able to do, to make some type of commitment, no apologies, but to be able to say that terrorism and dictatorships and these type of things seem to fester when you find areas of poverty where injustices have taken place. If we can have a stronger people in this world to make contributions as to who they are, to make them better, but indeed to make us better too, I think it would be a better country.

I would say to the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), when we were having the crisis in Haiti, and just as the Jewish people were denied in 1939 the ability to land here to escape the Germans and were sent back, you may

recall that we were sending back Haitians to go into a crisis where their lives could be lost.

I was on Lenox Avenue going home, and a constituent came to me and thanked me for the work I was doing on behalf of the Haitian refugees. I thanked him, but hearing no Haitian accent, I stopped him and I asked, where are you from? He said, North Carolina. I said, what is your interest in Haiti? He said, my brother, we all came from Africa. I really thought you understood that.

What a beautiful feeling where all of us can say that no matter where we came from, that we can help each other because in this republic, no matter how much pride we have for that flag, there is a sense of dignity and pride when we join with our own people, tell our own jokes and in the case of some groups of people, even enlarge among who they were and who their families were. That is what makes this country so great.

I would say to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), I am so glad that both of you are on the floor today, and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) as well who expedited this. It does not cost a lot of money, but it is one heck of a powerful and rich statement that we are able to say that in our country, with all of the problems that we have had and all the problems that we have overcome, that we are still concerned about individuals who have not reached that. And so no longer can kids have to dream of working in sugar fields, dancing and playing and singing. They can become outside of the domestic market. They can become doctors, lawyers, politicians and represent their countries and be able to go to the floors of the international communities and, without getting involved in dialogue, just a smile would say that God made us all in different colors, with different attributes, but we are so proud to be Americans that we want to help others, whether it is in Central America, whether it is in South America, but in this hemisphere. We do not have to apologize for what we have done, but we can make this a better world.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and those people that served as cosponsors to make this a resolution. Now we have to work to make certain it comes into being.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), my dear friend and distinguished colleague, for his powerful and moving and eloquent statement.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for his kind words, and this generation of Ameri-

cans has a wonderful role model to look up to and model themselves after in the gentleman from New York.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 175, which was introduced by my colleague, Mr. RANGEL. This legislation acknowledges African descendants of the transatlantic slave trade in all of the Americas with an emphasis on descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean, recognizing the injustices suffered by these African descendants, and recommends that the United States and the international community work to improve the circumstances of Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

While there have been considerable steps in addressing the many humanitarian issues facing these populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, more still needs to be done. The Resolution urges the U.S. to pursue policies and strategies directly targeted at addressing these problems. The Resolution promotes inclusion of Afro-Latino communities in the private and public sector.

In the 108th Congress, my colleagues and I concluded that, for too long, this country and other nations had ignored the struggle and challenges faced by Afro-descendant populations in the Americas. While the U.S. has been compelled to take steps to address our race problem in this country, we have often unintentionally forgotten or deemphasized the impact of that struggle throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The U.S. State Department reports that a disproportionate number of internally displaced people, IDP, in Colombia are of African descent. The Colombian non-profit CODHES estimates that Afro-Colombians accounted for at least 33 percent of total internally displaced people in 2002. Displaced Afro-Colombians from the coastal regions swell urban slums such as the Nelson Mandela Barrio on the edge of Cartagena.

Many Afro-Colombians reside in the most neglected regions of the country, where they are caught between state, paramilitary and guerrilla forces. The absence of meaningful Colombian state presence provides a vacuum in which illegal actors function with impunity. In spite of the influential role Afro-Colombians have played in national development, they have been marginalized in Colombian culture, economy and politics.

Afro-Colombians have made meaningful contributions to Colombia through the richness and diversity of their cultures. They are characterized by their ability to coexist peacefully, their sense of community and solidarity, their vast knowledge of the country's natural resources, and their love and concern for the environment. Even so, Afro-Latinos account for about 30 percent of the Latin American population and make up over 60 percent of its poor. Afro-Latinos also have extreme high rates of suicide, homicide, infant mortality, and illiteracy.

The displaced not only face violence and perilous living conditions, but they often have lost their traditional lands to armed actors, drug traffickers, ranchers, and the logging industry, realities that threaten the survival of their culture.

Brazil has the largest population of Afro-descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean. Shockingly, only one in three Afro-Brazilians attends secondary schools. Columbia

with the second largest Afro-descendant population has a shorter life expectancy for this population, limited access to medical and health care facilities, and the highest rates of illiteracy.

I also want to thank the other members of the Afro-Latino Working Group: The Honorable CHARLES RANGEL, Mr. DONALD PAYNE, Ms. BARBARA LEE, Mr. WILLIAM JEFFERSON, and Mr. GREGORY MEEKS. Their counsel, advocacy, and commitment to these issues have been instrumental in raising the importance and awareness of this cause to me and this Congress, I appreciate their support.

As a freedom-loving people, we in the United States have a role to play in the fulfillment of Colombia's democratic experiment to include aid for Afro-Colombians, while future disbursements of U.S. aid should factor in the needs of Afro-Colombian populations. Increased foreign assistance of Colombia must also be devoted to the development of marginalized peoples. Historically, Afro-Colombians have looked to the United States as a progressive society. America's struggle to end racism at home and to dismantle Apartheid in Africa gives Afro-descendants in Latin America hope that they will one day see that the mission towards a humanitarian freedom and democracy is not yet finished. America's voice in Latin America cannot be ignored.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of the legislation to honor and recognize the African descendants of the transatlantic slave trade throughout the Americas, including descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as recognizing the injustices suffered by these African descendants, and recommending that the United States and the international community work to improve the situation of Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I also rise to acknowledge the hard work of Congressman RANGEL, the dean of the New York delegation, and the author of this important resolution.

H. Con. Res. 175, of which I am a proud cosponsor, highlights the priceless contributions and indubitable needs of African descendants of the transatlantic slave trade in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This resolution of recognition is a very important and solid step forward that we need to take in order to resolve this international issue.

This resolution will address the social, economic and political affects as a result of the slave trade and colonialism era within the international community.

These communities are made up of over 150 million people in the Americas and the Caribbean.

Despite their large presence, the majority of Afro-descendants have been marginalized by racial discrimination, social exclusion, and innumerable political and economic acts of injustice.

Although protected by their country's constitutions, individuals of African descent in this region constantly struggle to maintain full protection of their rights.

Despite the large African populations Latin America, specifically Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba, these communities lack equal opportunities, strong political representation, and have yet to be recognized for their outstanding achievements abroad.

Colombia is the only country that has Afro-Colombia representatives and has been the

only country to approve legislation for the betterment of the African community, despite having only 2 of 166 seats in their House reserved for Colombians of African descent.

H. Con. Res. 175 will mark the beginning of progressive change in these communities.

Poverty levels, lack of education funding, and exploitation of human rights within these regions will be challenged as result of the passing of this bill.

This bill supports the creation of organizations to combat racial tensions, such as Brazil's Ministry for the Promotion of Racial Equality, and the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism in Argentina.

The United States and the International community will work in coalition to improve social conditions and encourage more participation of Afro-descendant populations to exercise their rights and not be oppressed as a result of their ancestry.

The creation of more education assistance programs, racial equality initiatives, housing policies, and healthcare programs will no longer be far from reach in this population as a result of this bill's passing.

This resolution will allow Afro-descendants to enjoy the prosperity of their culture and heritage, contribute to their communities without being ostracized, and be recognized publicly for their efforts.

These groups lack an organized process by which they can exercise their rights and opinions efficiently. With one in three Afro-Brazilians attending middle school, this is a population that desperately needs visibility and international aid.

As a representative of a large Colombian population within my district, this is an issue that has directly affected my constituents.

I am extremely hopeful that this bill will create more opportunities for all Latin Americans of African descent in their home country, allowing them to play an equal role to that of the entire population in the affairs of their society.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 175, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### COMMENDING THE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 364) com-

mending the continuing improvement in relations between the United States and the Republic of India.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 364

Whereas the Republic of India achieved its independence from the British Empire on August 15, 1947, and has since that time maintained a democratic system of government;

Whereas India has in recent years opened its economy to a considerable extent to trade and investment and has liberalized its internal economic system;

Whereas India's relationship with the United States has deepened in past years and encompasses cooperation on matters relating to international security, political stability, world trade, technology, science, and health;

Whereas India and Pakistan, neighbors who have fought bitter wars in past decades, have increased their efforts to settle their differences by peaceful means;

Whereas Americans of Indian origin have made critical contributions to the culture and economy of the United States;

Whereas the Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh, has, in his previous capacity as Finance Minister, helped shape India's economic policies to permit the growth of free markets, which has led to much greater economic prosperity for many people in India and the creation of a large middle class; and

Whereas Prime Minister Singh has accepted an invitation by the United States to make an official visit to Washington, D.C.: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the continuing improvement in relations between the United States and the Republic of India, exemplified by the current official visit of the Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh, is to be commended, supported, and expanded in the interest of the people of India and the people of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 364, the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

When the House considers resolutions at a time coinciding with visits of foreign leaders about the relations between their countries and the United States, it is because of the immense value that the Congress places on that relationship and the critical nature of the issues and policies that bind our nations.

Taking this into consideration, Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my

deepest gratitude to the House leadership for having authored and brought forward this particular resolution for our consideration. The visit of the Prime Minister of India is anything but routine, and the expansion and the strengthening of our relations with India is anything but routine.

I have the honor of co-chairing the India Caucus in the House of Representatives and have had the opportunity to witness this ever growing bond between our nations, a bond based on our shared democratic values and our common goals of safeguarding liberty of combating oppression and of confronting terrorism. His Excellency, Dr. Singh, the Prime Minister of India, will address a joint session tomorrow morning, where we shall have the opportunity to hear directly from him his vision of our relationship.

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From the U.S. standpoint, we will always honor Dr. Singh for his pioneering efforts to liberalize the Indian economy internally and to open that economy to the world. His work became the basis of a consensus that was carried on by Indian governments of other parties. It contributed to the economic development of India and to the improvement of conditions for those who are poverty stricken in that nation; and although that effort is not yet complete, it has contributed to the building of a greater middle class.

The trade that was fostered by India's opening to the world has benefited American and Indian consumers and producers. America needs trade partners who, once an agreement is made, will honor that agreement. We can count on India in this respect because those agreements are made under democratic procedures.

Mr. Speaker, we are also coming to recognize the contribution that India can make to the achievement of peace and security in this region and in the world and the potential that it has to make an even greater contribution over time. It would be wrong to fail to mention the enormous contributions that Americans born in India or of Indian descent have made to the moral, economic, and scientific welfare of this Nation as a whole.

Indian-Americans have shared with Americans of other origins their love of their ancestral homeland and have made it clear how the Indus Valley civilization's ancient insights can speak to this hemisphere in contemporary times.

It is my pleasure to welcome Dr. Singh to the Halls of Congress, and I ask my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.